

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 1-BWASHINGTON TIMES  
26 August 1985

# Dusting off the charwoman caper

**T**he Moscow spy dust story is a good August story, a good spy story, and I have been doing my best to keep up with it.

As I understand it, the Soviets have been dusting U.S. citizens in the Soviet Union with a chemical so they can track their movements. The dust is said to be dangerous because it can cause genetic damage and possibly cancer.

U.S. officials have said the Soviet secret police were placing the odorless and colorless substance on the steering wheels of diplomatic cars and other places where U.S. attaches might come into contact with it.

Presumably, if the attache slips out to talk to a possible defector and shakes his hand, or slaps him on the back, or something, all the secret police have to do is check out the defector for presence of the dust.

Now we are getting a few stories within the spy-dust story.

One is that the United States should fire all the Soviet employees in the U.S. Embassy — some suspect them of spreading the dust — and replace them with Americans.

The other is that the dusting has been going on since 1976.

This allegation has produced the appearance on television of Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1977 to 1981.

Mr. Turner, a retired admiral, said he had never heard of the dusting "despite taking an intense interest in the security of the embassy in Moscow."

He added the Reagan administration is trying to deflect criticism

and said, "They are intimating that everybody's known about this for a long time, and I say, 'Baloney.'"

I never know what to believe when spy stories are spread — such as, well, spy dust. I do know it often takes years before the, well, dust settles and you can get a hint of what really went on.

For example, Mr. Turner, appearing on the CBS "Morning News," said that Soviet employees working

that embassy, replacing them with Americans."

I'll never make a spy, I suppose, because I'm so easily sidetracked. Currently, I'm still stuck on the curious charwoman story.

If I were a member of this team that Mr. Turner sent to Moscow, looking for bugs with my colleagues in a room of the embassy, and a Soviet charwoman stuck her head in the door and said she had to "clean this room right now," I'd like to think I'd tell her to "bug off, baby." Or some such expression, indicating we wanted to be alone and it was, after all, our own embassy.

Instead, I have the distinct impression that the inspection team meekly filed out of the room — to be closely followed by the same charwoman as they went about their business in another area.

And I wonder why she, despite her size, wasn't tackled immediately and searched. (I'm guessing she was probably built like a tank.)

And I wonder if the same charwoman did not break up crucial meetings the U.S. ambassador was attempting to have with his associates. She seems quite capable of it. When she decided to clean, she cleaned.

Or was she, when she said, "I've got to clean this room right now," trying to tell the team something?

The phrase sounds suspiciously — to me, at least — like something an undercover agent might say.

Will she turn up at the summit?

I know. I know. I'd better stick to writing about pandas or the last of the neighborhood organ grinders.

But it's August.

## THE RAMBLER

By John McKelway

in the U.S. Embassy constitute "one of the weaknesses of our embassy."

He said that when he was director of the CIA he had sent a special team to check out the embassy from top to bottom, from room to room.

As the team went about inspecting each room, Mr. Turner said that, invariably, "a Soviet charwoman" would appear and say "I've got to clean this room right now."

Typically, as in all breaking spy stories, the charwoman incident is the sort of tidbit that leaves me hanging in the air.

Mr. Turner said the charwoman was the "kind of person" who was "putting this dust around the embassy, in my opinion." And he said, "We have got to protect ourselves better by getting them out of